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TAGS: [EAIR](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [ASEC](#) [VE](#)  
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA: EMBASSY DISCUSSES TSA NOTICE WITH MFA

Classified By: Economic Counselor Darnall Steuart for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: On September 11, Emboffs discussed the September 8 Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Public Notice with representatives of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's (BRV) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Emboffs urged that the BRV not proceed with threatened flight reductions for U.S. carriers. The MFA officials questioned why the USG would not accept International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) inspections given that both countries are members of that organization. The officials said they would report to the BRV's civil aviation authority (INAC) on the conversation and would urge INAC to meet with the Embassy or TSA. Emboffs said they would be willing to meet with INAC at any time. The tone of the meeting was professional and correct but we believe it will only serve to give the BRV a talking point that it has met with the USG to discuss the situation. This meeting occurred prior to the inflammatory speech later on September 11 when President Chavez announced the expulsion of the American Ambassador. End Summary.

2. (C) Acting DCM and EconCouns met September 11 with Chief of Staff Yaneth Arocha and First Secretary Maria Borregales of the MFA's Office of North American and Multilateral Affairs. In opening the meeting, Arocha said the MFA had tried in the past and would continue to try to serve as a bridge between the Embassy and INAC. She added that she agreed that the issue should be discussed between technical agencies. Drawing from talking points provided by the Department, EconCouns said that, contrary to public statements this week by BRV officials, the September 8 TSA Public Notice said only that TSA had not been permitted by Venezuela to carry out airport security inspections required by U.S. law. The Notice had not characterized the security conditions at Venezuelan airports. EconCouns added that the USG was aware of the contents of the letters issued by INAC to U.S. carriers which threatened to reduce flight frequencies. She urged that the BRV not proceed with flight reductions and underlined that the USG would view any such unilateral reduction in service as inconsistent with our bilateral aviation agreement. A/DCM and EconCouns underlined that we are ready to work with Venezuela to work to avoid damaging our aviation relations.

3. (C) Arocha responded by noting that both Venezuela and the United States are ICAO members. Venezuela was inspected by ICAO in 2004 and another inspection is scheduled in 2009. Why then, she asked, is the United States insisting on a unilateral inspection when both countries are ICAO members. EconCouns responded with a brief recap of the U.S. legislation mandating the inspections. She added that, particularly in a meeting held on the anniversary of the events of September 11, 2001, the BRV should certainly be able to understand the interest of the USG in airport security. Arocha responded by noting that those events had occurred because of a failure in domestic security, to which EconCouns agreed, underlining again that they explained why the USG has a heightened concern about airport security. EconCouns added that the United States is a hub for international air traffic, noting the hundreds of flights into the U.S. every day.

4. (C) A/DCM and EconCouns also urged that INAC inform the airlines as soon as possible of the details of any flight reductions it would require. They noted that September 28 is just two weeks away and added that the carriers might have to stop selling tickets if they did not know what flights they would be able to operate in two weeks. Arocha was very interested in this point. She closed with a pledge to inform INAC about the meeting and to urge once again that INAC meet

with the Embassy or TSA.

15. ( ) COMMENT: The tone of the meeting with the MFA representatives was professional and courteous. However, given that the current INAC President has refused categorically to meet with us and that, since the issuance of the Public Notice, INAC has informed the airlines that the issue "is out of our hands," we think it unlikely that MFA representations (if any) will have any effect. Instead, the Ministry is likely to use the meeting to refute our claim that the BRV would not meet with us to discuss the aviation situation. This meeting occurred prior to President Chavez's announcement the evening of September 11 expelling the U.S. Ambassador.

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